

MOTION

Neighborhood Council Subdivision Reforms

In 2001 the first Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils ("the Plan") was established. This document established the rules that effectuated Charter Section IX approved by Los Angeles voters that created the Neighborhood Council system. Primarily, the Plan set forth a process to certify neighborhood councils and draw their boundaries. This process took place over a period of about ten years until almost every inch of the City was covered by a Neighborhood Council.

The plan did not contain a mechanism for Neighborhood Council boundaries to change or split if the boundaries were drawn in such a way as to cover multiple disparate communities or communities that changed over time. Based on requests from neighborhood council members and neighborhood leaders who wanted an avenue to make changes to existing Neighborhood Council boundaries if those boundaries might no longer be serving their communities well.

Therefore, in 2016, City Council approved Ordinance 184,526 creating a subdivision process for Neighborhood Councils. This ordinance established a process for communities to petition to subdivide an existing neighborhood council if they felt the Council was not able to serve all of its disparate communities. If a petition was deemed complete per the requirements of the ordinance, the petition to subdivide would be put to a vote of the people of the existing Neighborhood Council and the proposed subdivided area. If both groups voted in favor of the subdivision a new Neighborhood Council would be created.

The first round of subdivisions occurred in 2017. A second round recently finished in 2018. Over these two rounds of subdivisions, a total of five subdivision elections were held with three affirmative votes for subdivision and two in the negative. This process has demonstrated some clear issues in the subdivision process as currently enacted that have generated unnecessary discord in neighborhoods and used up more city staff time than is beneficial for the overall Neighborhood Council system.

The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners reviewed the subdivision process after the elections in 2017 and developed a series of recommendations for improvements in the process, encapsulated in their letter set out in Council File 12-1681-S1.

Based on this letter, the lessons learned from the subdivision elections held in 2018, and the amount of staff time needed for subdivision elections, some reform to the subdivision process is clearly needed. However, it is clear based on the number of subdivision applications that have been received, that in order to allow communities to have self-determination, a subdivision process is still needed.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment be INSTRUCTED to:

Hold subdivision elections no more frequently than once every four years.


Hold the next subdivision elections in 2022 or later, to give time for the new subdivided Neighborhood Councils to become established and provide the department time to draft

AUG 14 2018

and adopt these regulations and other ordinance changes spelled out in Council File 12-1681-S1.

- Hold no more than three subdivision elections per subdivision election cycle. If more than three petitions are submitted, the three fully completed petitions with the largest number of residents, based on the latest data available from the American Community Survey of the US Census or related government data set if the American Community Survey is no longer available, shall be accepted.
- Not accept subdivision applications that include boundaries within a Neighborhood Council that has already had a subdivision election, whether successful or unsuccessful, until the third subdivision cycle after any previous subdivision election.
- Not accept subdivision applications that encompass less than 10,000 residents, based on the latest data available from the American Community Survey of the US Census.
- Not accept subdivision applications that encompass more than 50% of the residents of the existing Neighborhood Council (or 50% of the Neighborhood Council which is losing the most residents to the proposed subdivision if more than one Neighborhood Council is being proposed for subdivision), based on the latest data available from the American Community Survey of the US Census.
- Require subdivision petitions to contain at least 500 signatures from stakeholders of the proposed Neighborhood Council boundaries and that no more than 10% of signatures gathered can come from any one building or address.
- Require subdivision formation committees that have submitted a subdivision application to sit down with board representatives from the Neighborhood Council they seek to subdivide in at least one mediation session moderated by the Department. The mediation should include invitations to any Council Offices with overlapping boundaries and the Neighborhood Commissioner for the area. The mediation should endeavor to determine if the existing Neighborhood Council and the Formation Committee can agree to bylaws changes at the existing Neighborhood Council that satisfy enough of the Formation Committee's concerns in order for the subdivision application to be rescinded. If a mediated agreement cannot be achieved, the application could move towards a public hearing and review by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners as stipulated in the ordinance.
- Publish a subdivision policy encapsulating these and any other relevant requirements.

PRESENTED BY:


DAVID E. RYU
Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY:

